

Regius 15th September 1944

Sir—In justification to myself and to my fellow-German colonists I crave space to be allowed to give a correct report of the statements made by me recently at Sommerfeldt. The report in The Mount Barker Courier has been reported with omissions and additional wording which will allow suspicious-minded individuals to construe my remarks into a different and disloyal meaning. As usual, my Liberal opponents have lost no time in doing so. The Liberal Union ex-President, Secretary, and a few members of the Murray Bridge branch were on our trail at Sommerfeldt and made themselves conspicuous. They had brought along The Mount Barker Courier reporter, hence this unfair report. At this meeting I was reported to have stated that "stigmas had been cast on the German population in regard to their loyalty." The words as used by me were as follow:—

There had been a doubt in the minds of some as to the loyalty of the German colonists of Australia; but let me dispel that doubt, as the Germans here would be loyal to the British Empire. (Cheers.) There no doubt existed a bond of sympathy between the German of Australia and his fellow-German in the Fatherland, which would make it hard to fight and slaughter his brother-German. This feeling of sympathy did not exist in the breast of the British-born subject of British extraction; consequently the public should forbear with us. Nevertheless, we will be loyal to the British flag. This was not instigated by the socialistic parties of the world—they strenuously protested against the increased and heavy cost of armament in Germany. We have had proof of the fact that the Socialists of England were not unanimously agreeable to declare war. The Leader of the Labour Party resigned his position as Chairman, and the Welsh coal miners emphatically protested against coaling warships on special holidays. It was only when Great Britain was forced to take up arms to protect Belgium that the coalminers doubled their efforts to assist in protecting Belgium. It was the plutocracy of Germany who had instigated this war. The industrial and producing classes did not return men into Parliament to foment war on their behalf. The Labour Party desired peace, and, no doubt, will be found in the lead in initiating and agitating for the appointment of an International Tribunal of Justice to settle all great national troubles and complications. Then and then only can disarmament take place, and universal peace be installed.

I did not state that "there was a cause for this war," but said that Great Britain had discovered and acquired land for the settlement of her surplus population in the very same way as a landholder acquires land to settle his sons upon successfully. Germany, on the other hand, had attended to her business at home and created a great army instead of discovering and acquiring lands for her surplus population and trading with her possessions. When Joseph Chamberlain instigated his proposals of preference to British trade, Germany awoke in alarm, and now desired to take by force that which she miserably failed to acquire by judicious colonization. Germany, failing in colonizing, has caused our forefathers to seek homes under the rule of other nations. Many, many peaceful, industrious Germans have found their way to Australia. They have been received with open arms, have been placed side by side with natural-born Britons, and been given equal rights—have, in reality, become adopted children of Great Britain. Up

to the present we have been fostered and protected by the mother country, and no doubt will still receive that protection until we can protect ourselves. He who would be disloyal to Great Britain would indeed be an ungrateful specimen of the human race. In regard to the unjust remarks of Mr. Provis, in my opinion they were prompted by party bias. He construed my address into a want of loyalty. Let me remind Mr. Provis that I have two sons preparing to take their position in the ranks of defenders of the British Empire, and that—should the time arrive when men of my age are called upon to take part in defending Australia, or any other part of the British Empire—I will be ready to fight side by side with Mr. Provis.

I am, Sir, &c., F. W. LEHMANN.
Murray Bridge, September 10.

Sir—The Rev. John Blacket's letter in The Register is of interest to the volunteers. He states that the Council of Churches has sent a message of sympathy to the churches of Germany. As the Council of Churches and their adherents are so strong numerically, this may be constructed into a kind of general invitation to the Germans to come here. If this is the desire of so many South Australians, why are we trying to defend our homes and the Empire? Perhaps we have misunderstood.

I am, Sir, &c., MORPHETTVILLE.

Sir—It is pleasing to note that some at least of your correspondents are taking a proper view of this matter. Several letters and reports of speeches by Germans have appeared in your columns; and, while not one of them will stand the test

of critical analysis, they all force the reader to the conclusion that "Methinks he doth protest too much." There is no doubt that the British nation is the most confiding in the world; and the best proof of this lies in the fact that in almost every British community, the Motherland included, many of the leading positions, both public and otherwise, are held by Germans; and this in face of the declaration of some of them that they will never fight against Germany, and great doubt whether they would assist the land of their adoption against an outside foe. In many parts of this Commonwealth there are towns and villages bearing German names. This State is the worst offender in this respect, and it is now the plain duty of the authorities to correct this blunder, and cause every German name to disappear from the face of our map. The sooner the British people abandon the fatuous policy of allowing foreigners to occupy high offices and positions of public trust, the better it will be for the Empire.

I am, Sir, &c., N. N.

[A part of this letter has been omitted, in compliance with the Federal Electoral Act.—Ed.]

Sir—Having lived during some years in a purely German district, I can easily see which of your correspondents have also lived among them. My opinion is that the foreigners are treated too well by us. They in public express loyalty, and many wear badges and flutter miniature Union Jacks; but the sympathy of too many is with Germany, our enemy. When feeling runs hot you hear such remarks as "Germany will blow England out of the sea," "We'll beat you yet," and other expressions of interest in the other side. I am in favour of closing all German schools. Many of the Germans do not trouble about naturalization unless there is a gain to themselves, such as old-age pension, for instance. They should be debarred from receiving a pension unless they have been naturalized from the time when they entered the State. Property in possession of unnaturalized Germans should be confiscated to the Crown. They should be compelled to speak English. The majority of our German colonists were peasants in their own country; and if they only paused to think of what they were there and what a free, well-to-do, and independent people they are here, they surely would see what they owe to England through Australia. If they cannot do this they should be given a taste of German despotism to develop their thinking faculties.

I am, Sir, &c., ANTI-GERMAN.

Sir—Let any German or other person of Continental descent who thinks that his liberty would be more in danger under his national flag and military rule than under (say) the British-Australian, Canadian, or South African system of the most free home rule method yet attained, and who wishes to conserve and add to such liberty—let any such person (German in this case) reflect and see what Mr. Elkan's assertion means to those who have seen a duty and have obeyed. It can only mean that such a man should shoot himself or withdraw his offer and his oath of allegiance—surely a most unpleasant position for any Germans who have volunteered so dutifully to conserve their and our freedom. Now, if a Briton of free choice becomes a naturalized American, German, or Belgian citizen, giving up his birth, country, and flag, it is usually with the object of improving his position and that of his offspring by seeking to enjoy greater freedom, social progress, and prosperity. These are quite legitimate objects, and also carry duties. Such a person on taking an oath of allegiance immediately renounces his past allegiance and duties entirely. If a Briton went to Heligoland to enjoy better laws than he got in England, and took on the advantages and duties of citizenship there, even then the citizenship should be against his old country—not with the object only of crushing it, but to prevent its attempt to place again the shackles of less freedom on his greater freedom. Therefore it is plain that he would be fighting for vital principles and his rights, and thus his sentimentalities stand aside, giving place to higher duty towards justice. If it is not so with Mr. Elkan, there is an element (small, it is to be hoped) of Germans in Australia who are not too loyal, and they need curbing by the better German majority in our midst. In Australia we should be, as indicated by Woodrow Wilson, America's noble President, when he said in his funeral oration over the U.S.A. soldier victims who fell in Mexico recently—"No matter what tongue, name, or out of what nation they came, they were one and all equally Americans, thus equally honoured." So with the British flag in Australia. We are under one bond, not two; it is our vital scrap of paper (if we are not disloyal); it is our honour bond. Americans were mostly of British blood, but in fighting their brother they were fighting for a higher and more free right. Mr. Elkan should drill his soul under this form. He must take one of two positions, saying, "Yes, I am with you," or "No, I am not with you." If a logical thinker he should face the position clearly, see his illogical attitude, admit it candidly, and be friends all round again.

I am, Sir, &c.,
Lyndoch.

J. PEARCE.